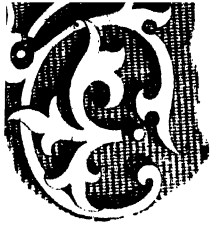




TRADE



Finos

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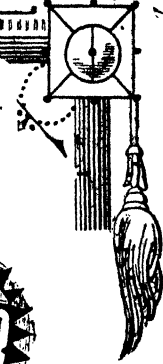
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Faber, A. D.

Cigar label art /





By A. D. Faber



Century House

WATKINS GLEN, N.Y.

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This is copy No. of a 500 limited edition.

Foreword

My collection of cigarania and cigar label art started rather casually. It seemed at first that I was the only person interested in preserving such reminders of a bygone age. Lately, however, I have been urged to tell others something of what I have discovered. The result is given herein.

As I began working through this field, it seemed there were two books rather than one. The first and most obvious was a book for the general reader—a story of old time smokers and their cigars with main attention on the whimsy of brand names used. This is what I have tried to accomplish under the title, **SMOKERS, SEGARS & STICKERS**. The second book is for a more select audience—those who are interested in matters typographic. This interest is cared for under the title, **CIGAR LABEL ART**. Both books are put out in very limited first editions, and some pages are the same in each.

The thing that distinguishes **CIGAR LABEL ART** (and also accounts for its higher price) is the inclusion of a number of original cigar box labels and edgings as tip-in's. These examples of early lithographic art are already collector's items, far more interesting and valuable than are the old trade cards now collected so avidly by many. Naturally in a book of this size, there are limitations on the number of items that can be shown. But I have kept my story down as much as possible, letting the old labels and top-brand dies speak mainly for themselves.

This has proved a very rewarding hobby—I even learned to enjoy smoking a cigar! Thanks are due Robert Oh. Paine and the Editor of the Americana Series for valued assistance in tracking down sources. My only regret is that we cannot get all of the plates in color. Cigar Label Art was a lithographers field day.

A. D. FABER.

Ithaca, N. Y., Sept. 15, 1949.

The Respectable Vice

Cigar smoking has been a respectable vice for generations. Back in the 1880's when the craze was at its height, no man was considered well-dressed without one in his mouth. It was a definite mark of having arrived in the world. Young boys smoked corn silk rolled in leaves behind the barn and longed for the day when they could smoke a real cigar in public like their fathers. Up and coming young men saved their pocket money during the week so that they could sport an affluent looking weed during the Sunday promenade. Thomas Nast and other American cartoonists found in a huge cigar a ready symbol to show affluence and waste. It was the ultimate in exterior snob display, putting one in a class above less financially favored men.

Tobacconists did their part in supporting this dandy appeal. Everybody that was anybody had fine cigars bought or made especially for them. The industrial Nabobs of the period, the gay socialites, the affluent clubmen sent their tobacconists to the huge import humidors in lower Manhattan. There the choicest Havana cigars were carefully picked for their private use, and magnificently boxed in imported cedar. Many came with the tycoons name, initials, name of his country place or yacht on the label and cigar band.

Boxes of these private brand cigars were often sent to the tycoons favorite restaurants and clubs, where they were always available for their exclusive use. Such places as Rectors and Delmonicos had giant humidors that held hundreds of boxes of private brand cigars. One's favorite club, such as the Knickerbocker, the Century, the Racquet and Tennis Club kept the unique private brands of their members in huge humidors; for that matter they still do, but not to the fabulous extent of the old days. Many of the younger members now enjoy only the cigarette. But the gentleman's club has always been the place to enjoy a good cigar, as well as fine wines and somnambulant heavy food. The executive committees of these exclusive clubs always managed to have a cigar lover, appointed to the sole duty of seeing that the humidor was properly run. He would have thousands of fine cigars on hand to

satisfy all tastes, as well as to astound the most finicky of guests. His was almost as exalted position as the wine lover member of the house committee, who saw that the finest wines were laid down in the tremendous cellars. It was a great day for the cigar, and the stomach.

The hundreds of cigar manufacturers all over the country tried to sell the cigar's snob appeal to the masses. Brand names such as CLUBMAN'S FAVORITE, THE NABOB, and the LADY'S FRIEND were widely advertised. The finest color lithographers of the day were employed to create lush illustrations for cigar box labels. They were given complete freedom, and as much time as necessary to make the lithographic stones. Some of these labels of the 1880's, before embossing became common, used as many as 22 different stones, and as many different inks to achieve their colorful effects! Think of the print costs today! The Victorians discovered the Body Beautiful as an aid to advertising, and many of the labels of the period emphasized the well-rounded charms that were so appealing to the man's-world of the day. Label ladies during a period when dresses swept the ground, often showed short skirts and a shapely calf, as well as lovely figures in costume tights. These labels were considered naughty-nice, but not vulgar in any sense. They were art—and they did sell cigars!

Leisurely Pleasure

Today the average smoker nervously burns through his daily pack of cigarettes and considers cigar smoking a lost art, as dead as the Australian dodo. This is not so. Cigar smoking was, and remains, one of the better pleasures open to man, and any lack of interest in its practice and art must be set down to our hurried pace of living, not to the act itself. How many will realize that the true reason for the decline in cigar smoking is that tobacco is now available in a more convenient and less expensive form. One simply can not forget that cigar smoking demands a more leisurely pace. A good cigar must be quietly mulled over and enjoyed, whereas a few quick puffs on a cigarette quickly puts nicotine into the system. Then there is the cost angle. The average man who gets

his daily ration of nicotine through the more pleasurable cigar, smokes less, but spends about the same amount as his cigarette smoking brother. If he smoked as continuously as his cigarette puffing relation, it would, of course cost him a great deal more.

The extra cost is well spent, according to the cigar enthusiast, and I am inclined to agree with him. Mind you, I did not start this book as a cigar smoker. In fact I looked down on the breed. It was only after coming on a cache of early cigarania that I took notice of this method of enjoying the delights of the weed. But in the course of tracing down old time cigar makers I was forced to sample their cigars. I found, curiously, a strange pleasure, something akin to a taste sensation that Helen Lee Mason, the food authority, attributes to real barbecue sauce. I can only say that if a man can afford the time to leisurely smoke a cigar, he may find a new sense pleasure in the weed. It is like the difference between a glass of beer and a fine wine.

Famous Cigar Smokers

History is studded with famous cigar smokers. Edward VII, a recognized connoisseur of his day, rated cigars high amongst his pleasures. And today his grandson, the Duke of Windsor, also prefers tobacco in this form. One of the most fabulous of the cigar smokers of the last century was the elder J. P. Morgan. On his palace yachts, the Corsairs, he always had special built-in humidor space for his innumerable cigars, those he smoked himself, and those he so freely gave to his cronies, business acquaintances, fellow board members and the like. He liked the big, mild Havanas best. J. P. was a heavy-set florid man, who enjoyed his sensual pleasures, such as the finest of rare stones, the most delicate and valuable of gems, and three different sizes of the best cigars for different occasions. When he was in a hurry he smoked a small five inch Regalia de Morgan; when he had a little more leisure he smoked a six-and-a-half inch Meridiana Selectos, and when he knew that he had the time and full leisure to enjoy a big cigar he smoked an eight-inch torpedo shaped Meridiana Kihinoor. He and his cigars were famous, almost as famous as are those of Winston Churchill.

The Astors, past and present, have long been addicted to the heavy pleasures of the fine cigar. Other devotees of the cigar include cinema luminaries Edward G. Robinson, Charles Coburn and Clark Gable and the popular intellectuals, Sir Alexander Korda, and the Arch of Triumph author—Erich Maria Remarque.

Among most fabulous cigar smokers of the past was the Rothchild banking family. They would order from the Cuban warehouses 40,000 HENRY CLAY SOBRANOS at a time, carefully packed in huge inlaid cedar cabinets. One of Napoleon III's Marshalls decided his position wasn't quite secure enough, so he ordered a batch of the finest cigars the city of Havana had to offer. The whole batch cost \$120,000, but one shouldn't complain too much, for they were tipped in gold and monogrammed with the imperial "N".

Though the day of the gold tipped cigars is over, present day smokers of any class smoke their cigars for basically the same reason as these fabulous figures of the past. The man who smokes a midget five cent cigar and the man who smokes a dollar Havana have much in common. They both go through the same ritual. One may have had an excellent country boiled dinner (not considered an epicurean feast though there is no reason why it shouldn't be); the other had an eleven course, properly wine-washed dinner at the monthly meeting of the epicure's society. Yet both have finished the sensuous pleasure of eating; they have had their coffee, they have pushed their chairs back from the table, and out comes the cigar, usually from the left vest or coat pocket. Then the leisurely ritual: the cellophane wrapper, or the band is removed. The sealed end of the cigar is bitten off or punctured. The cigar is placed in the mouth; nothing hurried, nothing nervous like the cigarette smoker. A wooden match or a large flamed pocket cigar lighter is brought to the lighting end of the cigar; and the cigar leisurely lit. It is also something more, it is an aromatic, flavorful pleasure, a sensuous olfactory delight that relaxes the smoker.

The habitual cigarette addict who smokes his pack or more a day does not get the full tobacco-aroma contrasts, the subtleties that are the daily pleasures of the cigar smoker. The chain smoker

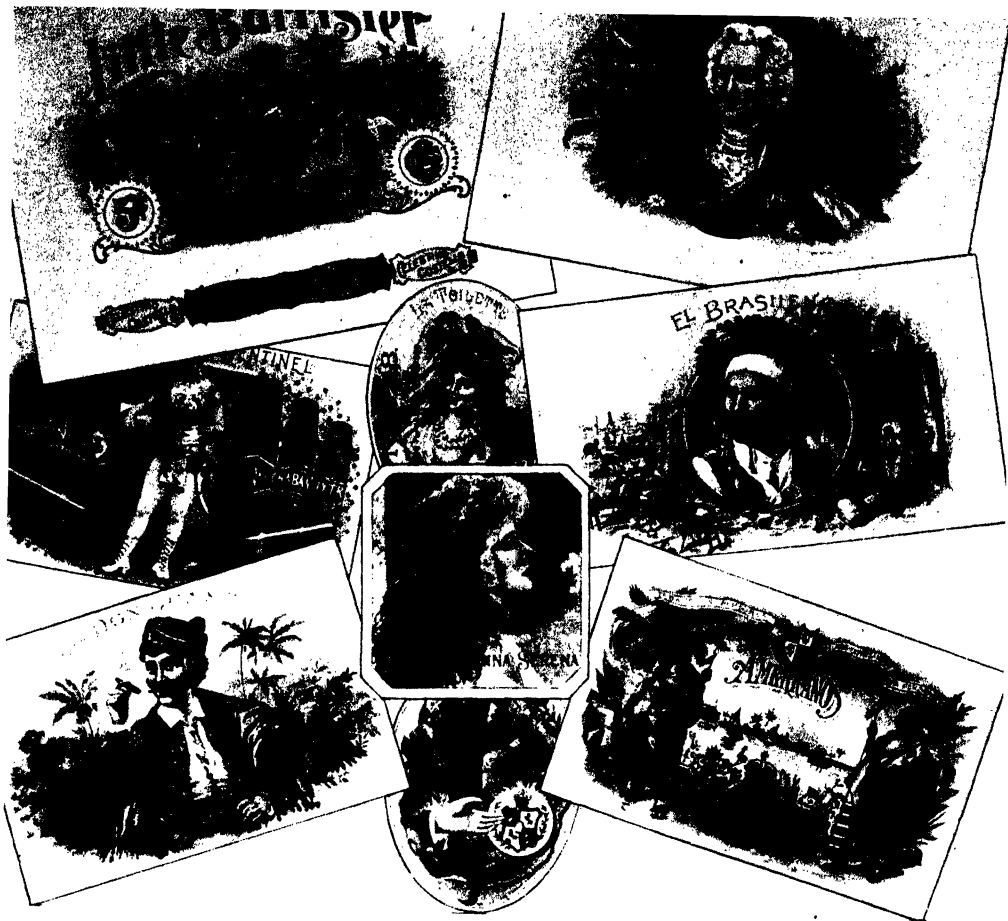
dulls his sense of smell, keeps a lingering tobacco after-birth around his taste buds. The cigar smoker, who often smokes more tobacco by weight, has periods of abstinence, where his organs of taste and smell are given a rest. Thus the subtle flavors of the cigar strikes the senses in a fresh clean way after each period of abstinence; thereby producing stronger appreciation due to contrast.

One of the reasons cigar smoking is far more common amongst men than women, is that the male organs of taste and smell are not usually highly developed, or as delicate. A stronger stimulus is required in order to activate them. They get this with a good cigar. I wonder if this is what Kipling meant when he wrote, "A woman is only a woman, but a good cigar is a smoke!"

Cigar smoking can start with simple, inexpensive cigars, that are highly standardized as to their flavor and their exterior complexion. But the real cigar smoker becomes a very particular creature if he has the money to satisfy his feelings, and taste for the ultimate in the rolled weed.

He quickly graduates to a cigar that has a wrapper of a particular shade, delicate and hardly distinguishable to the amateur of such matters. After he discovers the cigar shade he prefers, it practically becomes a fetish with him; and some of the older cigar smokers have been known to daily bemoan the fact that their favorite cigar-maker died before they did, for they no longer can get the particular blend and cigar of their choice. This, of course, is the extreme of the delicate pleasures in cigar smoking; but one that nevertheless is indulged in by many of the smokers.

Regardless of how it appeals to bystanders, smoking is a pleasure to the man with the cigar. People may wail and cry against them, but cigars are here to stay. Its personal smoking pleasure have no equal, except to that vast opposing army of 'smelly' old pipe smokers. It is well to mention here that not all pipe smokers are purists; that is, smoke only the special pipe blends. There are always a few compromisers who enjoy both good cigars and pipes. They solve their dilemma by buying good cigars, crumbling the cigar into their pipe bowl and having their cigar and smoking their pipe too!



These labels (to be pasted on the inside of cigar boxes) provided color lithographers with many a fascinating subject. Originally called "stickers", they are now collector's items.



Patent cigar lighters and cigar cutters were much in vogue in the latter part of the 19th century. One raised the dog's tail and inserted the tip of the cigar in his mouth, then lowered the tail and the dog took his bite. Next the cigar was taken to the ever-burning flame of the lighter and ignited. Some lighters used kerosene, some used gas. This was long before the days of pocket lighter.



PARTNERS

THIRDS

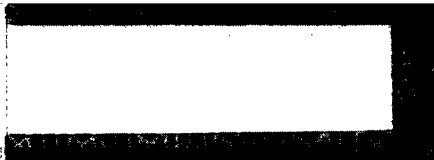
SECOND

EDITION

The Latest.



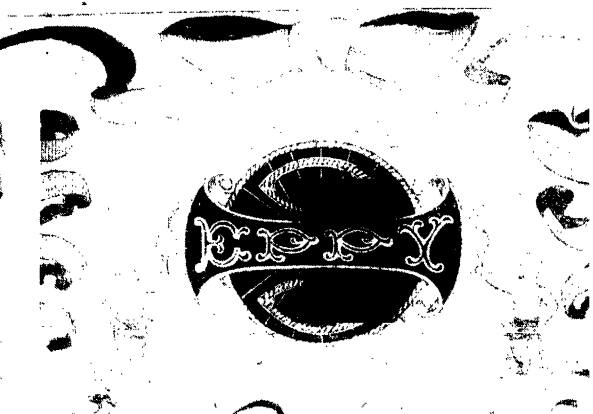
NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MAY 11, 1907



COLOR

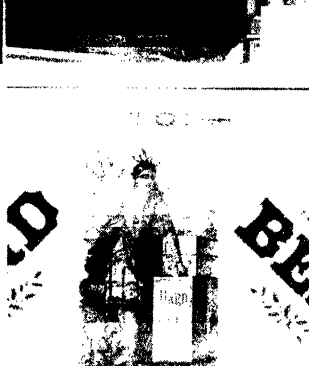
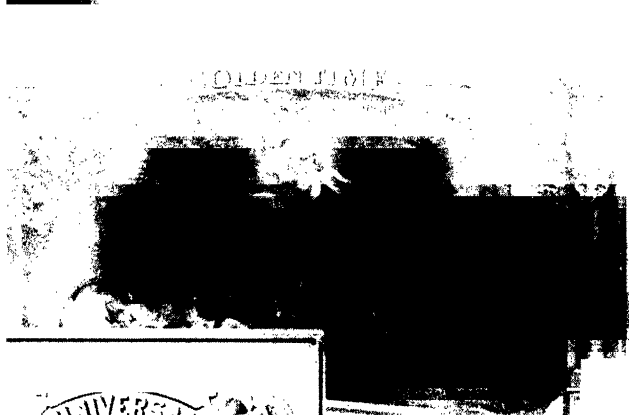
U.S.S.

RED PLUME



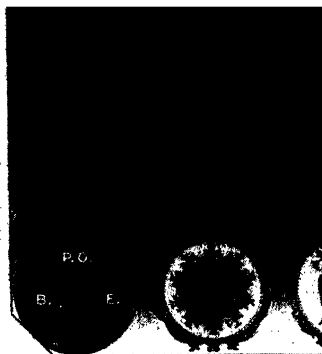
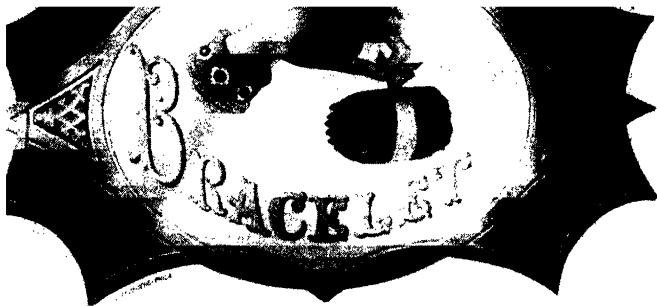


HIGHLANDERS.



LITTLE SMOKER





SPANISH BLOSSOMS



OLIVETTI



SPORT

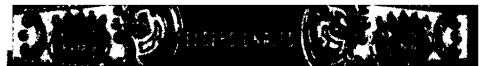
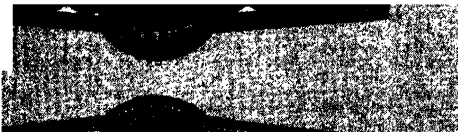
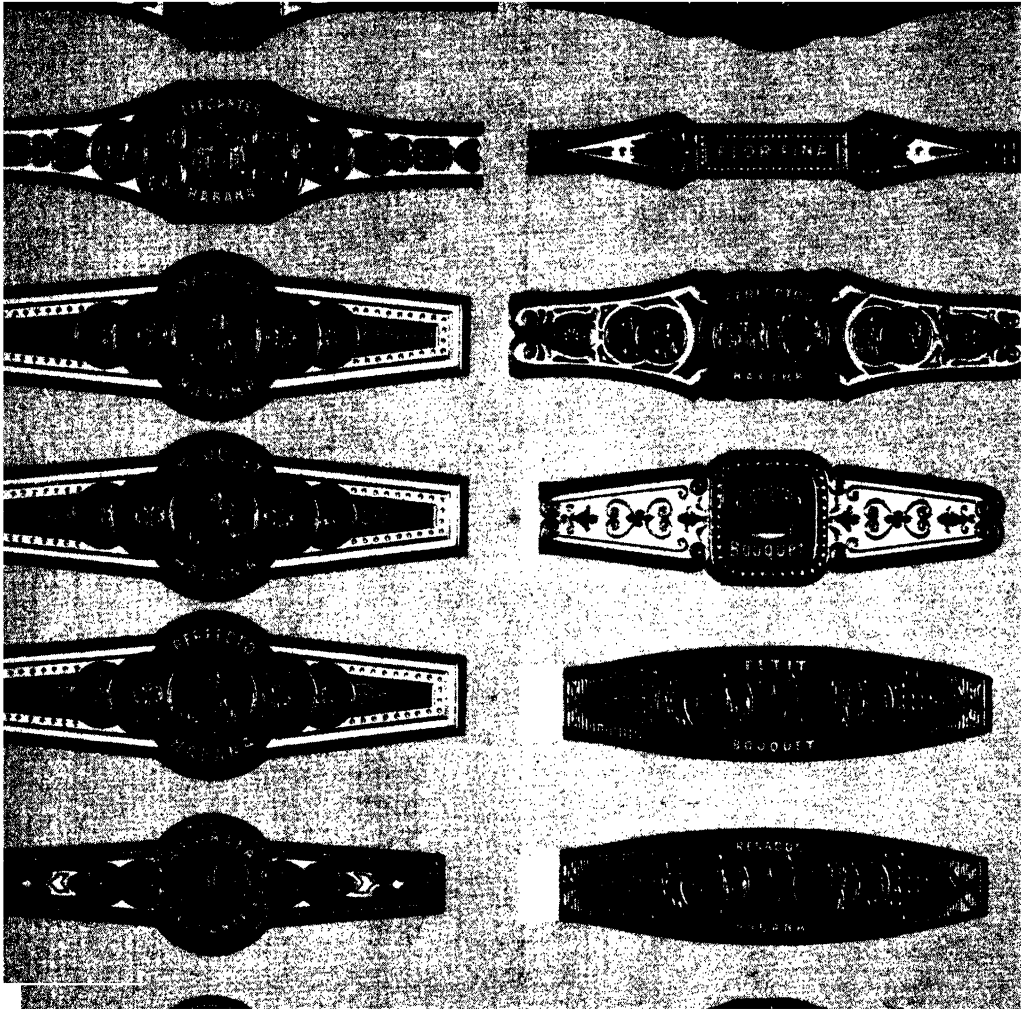




CIGAR STORE INDIANS were originally known as Black Boys, and first appeared to advertise tobacconist shops in 17th Century London. True, their head dresses of Tobacco leaves strangely resembled the feathers of a full-fledged chieftain and their gaily painted tunics also had a feather-like quality. But the features were distinctly negroid and it is clear the sculptors had neither seen nor wished to depict an American Indian. These first signs showed the carved wooden figures smoking a pipe or long twisted leaf called a "segar". When the Blackamoor went out of style in signs, in the 18th century, his place was taken by the wooden highlander with his segars, or some such figure as punch.

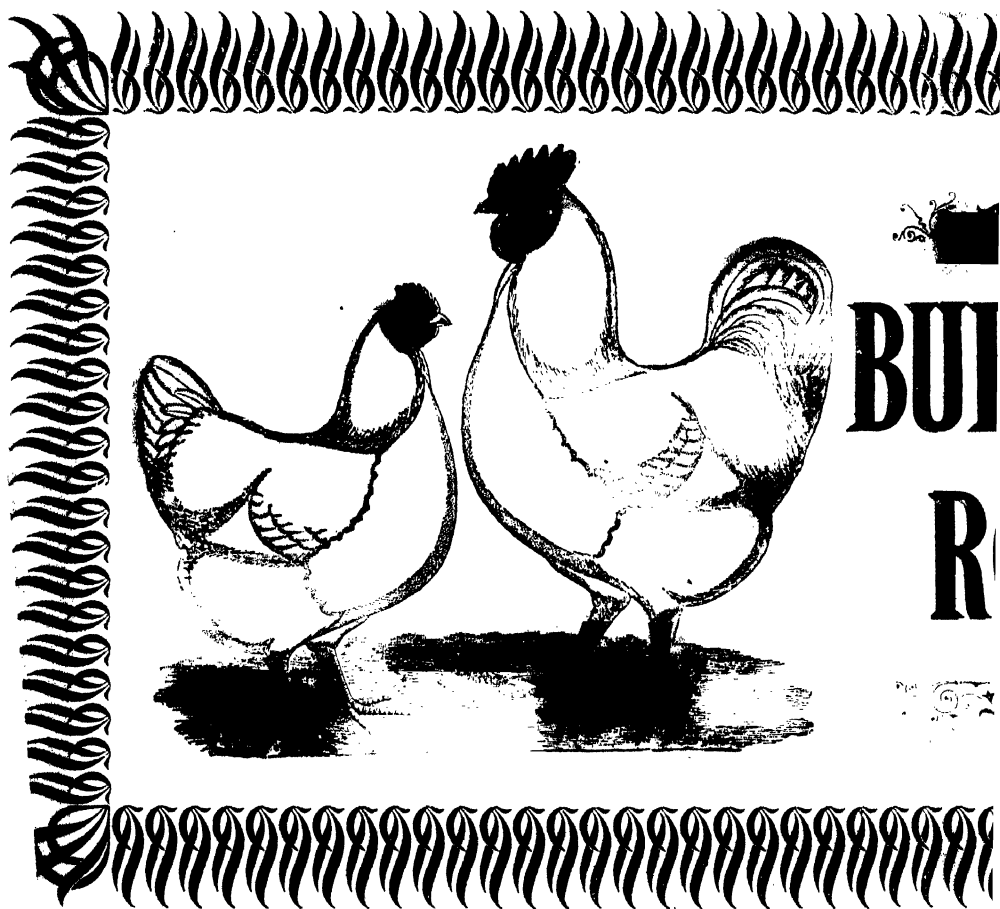


WHEN IS AN INDIAN NOT AN INDIAN? When he's a wooden Indian, of course. The first definitely known American Wooden Indian to have decorated a tobacconist shop dates from 1840, and was the sign of the shop of D. H. McAlpine in New York City. Wooden Indians shortly blossomed throughout the land. They were expensive signs, sometimes costing as much as \$300.00. They reached their height about 1870, and went out of style rather quickly thereafter. Now collectors' items, they still remind one of the days when the tobacconist was a gathering place for smokers and their segars.

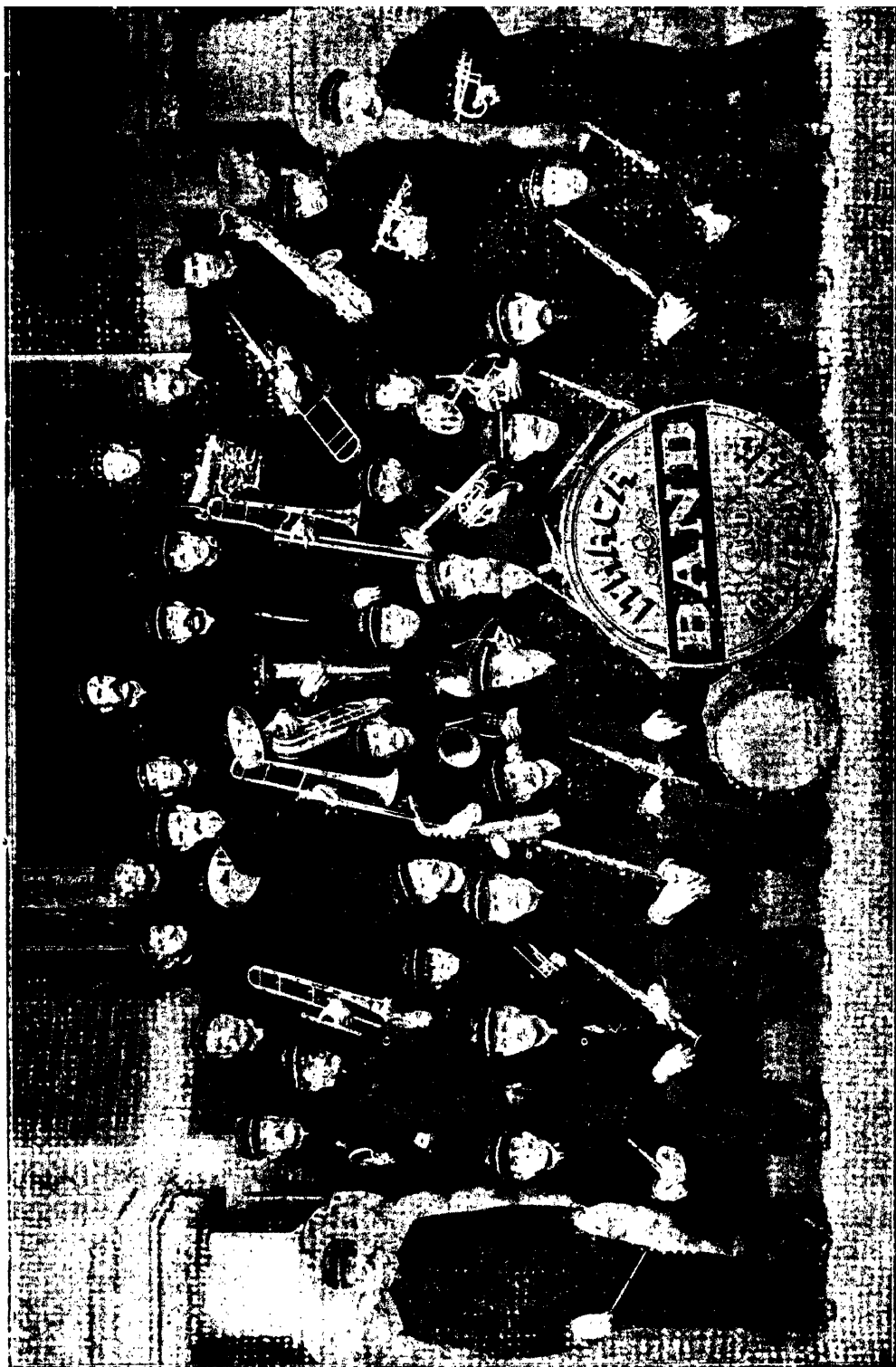




These labels (to be pasted on the inside of cigar boxes) provided color lithographers with many a fascinating subject. Originally called "stickers", they are now collector's items.



SMOKE BUFF RO

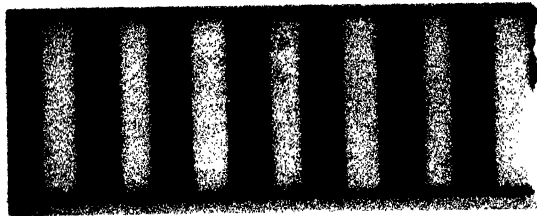


The original back box label used for cigar named after Conway's famous band.



MANUFACTURED BY D. B. STEWART & CO.

Old Cigar Bands and box edgings are collectors' items today.



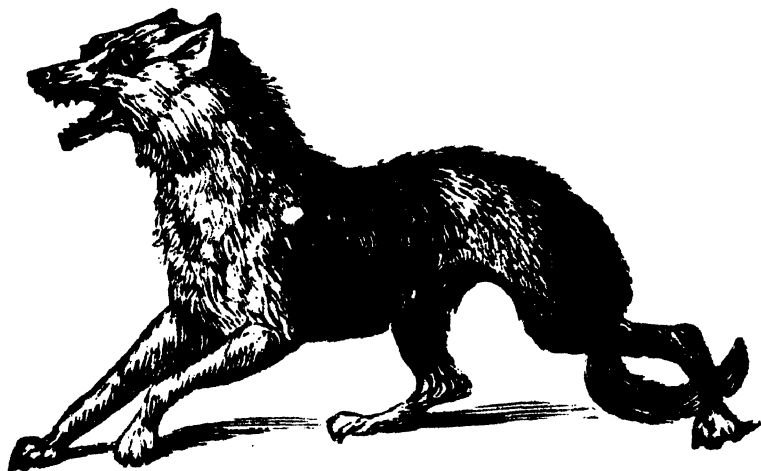
Original Box edgings used to bind cigar boxes.



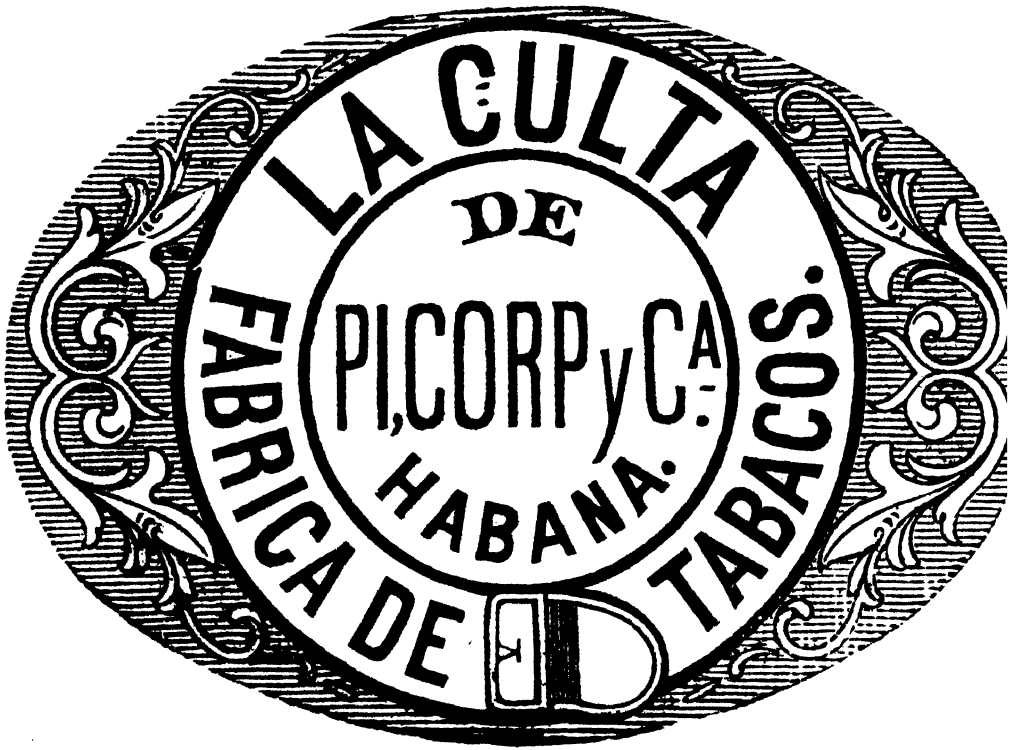
Manuf

One group, showing simple American names;

OURS



Original labels used to paste on back covers of cigar boxes.



Here is a Yankee cigar box top brand that let the unwary believe the fine hand-made cigars were made by a legitimate FABRICA de TABACOS in HABANA. A shrewd deception that was an accepted part of our mid-eighteenth century life.

Brand Dies And Stickers

The illustrations in this book are a peculiar, practically unknown form of early American commercial-art. They come mainly from heavy brass "top brand dies" used to emboss directly the tops of the old cedar cigar boxes. This form of reproductive process is sometimes used today on wooden boxes for other uses, but rarely on present day cigar boxes. The limitations of the medium—that is, printing into the wood—made it impossible to have extremely fine lines, for they would have been lost in the grain of the cedar, would have worn down too rapidly in the pressure-printing process, and would not have served identification purposes. To our contemporary eye, these strong pictorial designs are quite a pleasure. The limitations of the medium allowed, forced, necessitated simple strong lines in the lettering. The designs and the pictures developed by the craft-artist are quite individual.

Some of the top brand dies used herein are rather beaten up. But they are the originals that led a hard life. They didn't print on delicate paper surfaces, had rather to contend with cedar wood. They had to beat the grain, press themselves in. The dies are unsigned, for even in its day, this was a lowly reproductive medium. The finer artists of the period ran to magnificent woodcut prints which are today preserved in our museums. But many an almost as fine artist spent his days in cutting and designing top brand dies for the cigar trade. The product constitutes a vestige of an art world surviving from an earlier century because of the nature of the impression problem, printing on wood with strong, firm lines.

Let me tell you the story that lies behind the amusing line cut dies and lithographic cigar box stickers which illustrate this book. These were purchased at a private sale in upstate New York for very little money some time ago. A private sale is a country phenomenon, the next best thing to an auction. A lawyer has an estate to settle; after the heirs have taken their pick of a lifetime's accumulations and some reputable antiques dealer has purchased the better furniture, the person running the private sale comes in

and puts a price tag on everything remaining. Half an hour before the time of opening the sale, the regulars are waiting at the door, ready to rush in and grab off the best buys. When the doors are opened, people are let through the house in lots of ten to twenty. They pick up what they want and pay the cashier on the way out. In New England, this is called a "tagged auction."

How Hobbies Start

I didn't go to this particular sale until very late; but that seems a good time to hunt for bargains. I noticed a two-storied shed out back and decided to go out there and rummage around. (You must remember I heard tales of the discovery of magnificent pairs of Sandwich lamps in out of the way places!) I searched the place thoroughly and under a pile of rubbish I found three boxes full of what I thought were old paper printing cuts. As I have always been interested in things typographic I asked the price and purchased what I found, along with bundles of old labels that had been scattered over the floor by previous seachers for gold. One woman, a post-card collector, had already acquired a box of the labels and the historian lawyer had taken home a box for his children to scribble on. Both of these lots I got back and then lugged the entire assortment of cuts and labels home.

I couldn't understand quite what I had acquired. Then I began to take some rubbings and found that I had stumbled upon the remains of an early cigar box manufactory. I counted the dies and found that I had over 250 items. Many were hand carved out of brass, some were even out of wood. After much research I discovered exactly how these dies were used and the approximate period of their use. Some dated back to the 1840's, though most came from the 1870's and 1880's.

A month later, after the new tenant had moved in, I had a hunch to go back and look around once more. There might be overlooked items in the field of cigar-label art!

My hunch was right. When the present owner of the site of the old Cigar Box Factory was rummaging around, he tripped and fell against a brown paper covered wall. He pulled away the paper

and found shelves packed with old records, letters, additional cigar box labels, and other cigarania. This material was acquired and added to my collection. What a blow to a thorough seacher. I once inflatedly thought I knew how to find things where other people had missed them!

The few pages of old cigar box labels in this book don't and can't do justice to their magnificent color, design, art work, humor and what have you. The illustrations do indicate their quality as an American Art form, unique and magnificent in their own right. This is basically due to the fact that the lithographic artists had complete freedom of medium, as well as amazing technical skill in lithographic printing; they often used twenty or more individual colors in the printing of the labels. It should also be remembered that the cigar box labels weren't fly-by-night advertising affairs, such as the contemporary advertising cards, used for six months or so and then superceded by new cards. When a cigar box label was created, it was created for a lifetime of forty or more years (the average life of a cigar brand, and in turn of colorful labels, was forty years for the independent makers of the 1860's, 1870's and 1880's.) Therefore extremely good basic, art work was put into the labels. They sold as well, or even better, twenty years after their first introduction, as in the year they were first introduced. A magnificent, multicolored label became the lasting trademark of the cigar-maker who bought it. Real money could be put into its design.

A Golden Opportunity

Lithographic artists of the period responded to such opportunity and did some of their best work on cigar box labels. They produced a strictly American art form that is rapidly becoming forgotten today. Their product can be shown briefly herein, for we are limited in the reproduction of color. A great deal of text matter, however, can be included under the labels and cuts, showing how these reflect the history and spirit of the times. A fuller treatment, with an attempt to reproduce all varieties of cigar label art in full color, must await some later philanthropist!

Americans have always had an addiction to foreign imports, such as German Barons by the hoof, French silks by the yard, and Havana Cigars by the box. Most Havana cigars didn't come from Cuba at all. They were made right here in this country by shrewd mid-nineteenth century Yankees and skillfully labeled after the Spanish manner.

It wasn't long, however, before cigar manufacturers discovered the greater sales value of strictly American names, such as Honest Abe. Even then, every cigar counter had at least one box of hokum cigars that purported to have been hand-made in Havana. By 1870 the false Cuban approach to hand-made American cigars was on the wane. At that time there were fourteen hundred active independent cigar factories in the country making from 15,000 to 20,000 different brands. Genuine American brand names came into fashion, as will be seen in this book's illustrations. These labeled American cigars still used fine (and not so fine) Cuban wrappers, as well as the increasingly fine grades of home grown cigar tobaccos.

So many different brands of cigars were issued in the 1880's that in a town of 10,000 population you would have found anywhere from 150 to 250 different brands carried in stock at any given time. They were of all types; the local cigar maker's special, his finest cigars, his best five centers, and the individual brands for the local drugstores, grocery stores, and the like. To top this off were fine locally made cigars with the high-sounding Spanish names as well as good Havana addresses, and numerous nationally sold, out-of-town brands.

The vigorous brand competition created a special sales problem, that of attracting the customer's eye when so many different cigars were displayed. You couldn't plaster the tobacconist's wall with large posters advertising each individual brand offered there. You could use only the inside of the box covers and the outside box ends. The inside box covers were seen in the display cases, and the box ends on the stacks of shelved boxes.

In such limited space competition was keen, and this is where the multi-colored labels did their selling job.

In the 1870's the commercial use of color was relatively inexpensive. Advertising, especially the catch-eye cigar box labels, took to color. Along with box top labels there were very lovely edgings which were used on the edges of cigar boxes. If you have ever been so fortunate as to see an old catalog of samples containing several hundred of these edgings, you have seen quite a colorful and delightful display. The edgings were simply, finely, often elegantly lithographed in many colors, with a restrained use of gold. In the 1880's, they sold for two, three, four, five dollars and more a ream. If they were purchased today, the \$2.00 ream would cost around \$12.00, and the \$4.00 reams around \$24.00.

The lithographic artists and the lithographers were able to go all out on the cigar box labels. There was plenty of money in making them, and the lithographers, the owners of the stones, knew that a good stock label would sell for years to come. Such magnificently done cigar box labels were not cheap. In the 1880's they cost as much as two and three cents each! But the cigar manufacturer with the most colorful label had a good chance of selling the most cigars to the consumer at the point-of-sale in the cigar store display case. He paid.

The natural, profitable life of these multi-colored labels was long (especially if the lithographer left space for the change of brand names on his stock labels). Their use was extended at least forty years. Take the case of one, Charlie Green of Ithaca, N. Y. He first started his most personal brand, CHAS. GREEN'S BEST, in 1883, and is still making them. Other colored lithographers of the same period, the 1870's—even the famed Chromos and the stylized Currier and Ives had comparatively short lives! The supply was exhausted within a year.

At the same period as these cigar box labels there was extensive lithographing of trade cards. The first American ones came out in 1865 and were given as a premium with a well known bathtub cleaner. These trade cards were very colorful, and were collected by innumerable people in the 1880's, and are even of interest to collectors today. Their popularity was so great in the 70's and 80's that the advertisers brought out new series every year.

Such work lacked the necessary permanence to allow for the heavy investment in fine art work, numerous lithographic stones, and the skilled use of many colors. Actually, they did not compare with the cigar box labels.

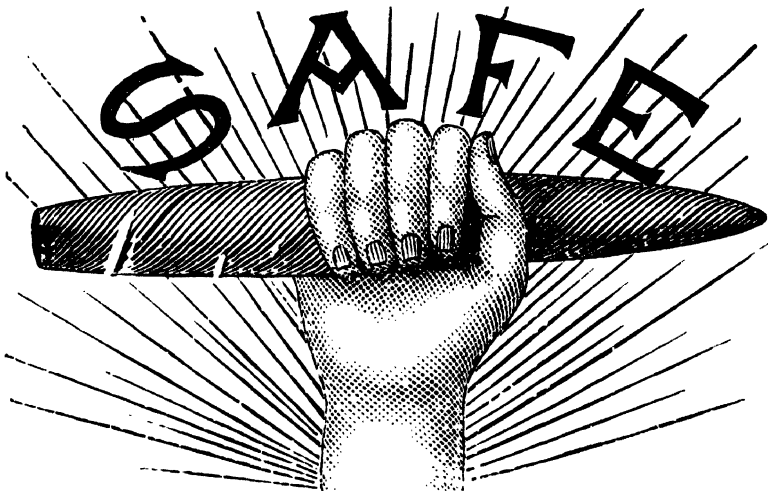
Cigar box labels were early collected—but with great difficulty—for they had to be soaked off cigar boxes. Thus they are much rarer than the more easily handled trade cards. Their value, too, was entirely different. A large initial investment in fine art work, good stones, and many colors paid off over the years. The result was fine labels, magnificent colors, and most important, great leeway in subject matter. Lithographers couldn't go on forever producing pictures of cigars, tobacco leaves, Havana Harbor with the inevitable Moro Castle in the distance. Imagination was needed. So to gain trade and offer distinctive variety to the cigar manufacturer, the subject matter was as varied as the life of the period. A good collection of labels gives a colorful survey of the times. The lithographic artist had much freedom and time to work. He really struggled with the problems of his media, and a well-integrated design resulted. As production problems became gradually easier, the facility with which full-color designs could be transferred to the printed page went to the designers' heads. They threw in everything but the kitchen sink. Labels dripped with symbolic borders, flowers of the garden and flowers of womanhood, patriotic and historical themes, all in one label. But with the advent of the half-tone screen and the camera, we reach a sad degeneracy of the art. The camera could not lie. Gone were the glamorous creatures that dreams had created, and in their place came sad drooping shells the camera caught in their most lifeless moments.

Salute To A Lost Art

The two forms of cigar label art illustrated in this book had their own distinctive limitations. This set the pattern for each specific type of work. The makers of top-brand dies had to achieve the stark simplicity of weathervane craftsmen. By diligent effort, they achieved a strong, virile art form for imprinting on wood. The makers of the lithographic plates for the cigar box stickers, on the

other hand, had very limited space in which to work their color marvels. By great effort, they achieved highly compact, frequently bizarre, but always interesting designs.

The cigar box labels, though not illustrated so fully in this book, are shown sufficiently to give an indication of their value as art craft form. Even today's four color process and the half-tone screen cannot match the superb efforts created by our 19th century lithographers on stone. A complete collection of cigar label art—even from a single manufactory—would assume considerable value today. What I have given here is only a sample of what may be found with a little diligent searching. It is my hope that this brief tale of old time smokers and the “segars,” and well as the “stickers” used to adorn old cigar boxes will bring about a revival of interest in this early American art form. Certainly the remaining vestiges of such lithographic and embossed wood printing is worthy of preservation in our museums and local historical societies. Any city that boasted of a well-rounded set of local cigar manufacturers in the last decades of the Victorian era has a duty to dig up and preserve its lore. Otherwise only the examples shown in this book will remain to remind us of a flowering of commercial art peculiarly in keeping with its times.





OUR RECORD could mean our record-making cigar, or our local newspaper, which was called THE RECORD. The fame of the paper and the fame of a local cigar often went hand-in-hand.



Here is an old time label that creates illusions of grandeur. But what GOLDEN TIMES?



This one has everything! Butterfly, leaves, ribbon, fancy lettering, and most important of all—the appreciation of the quality to be found in the SILVER TIP cigar.



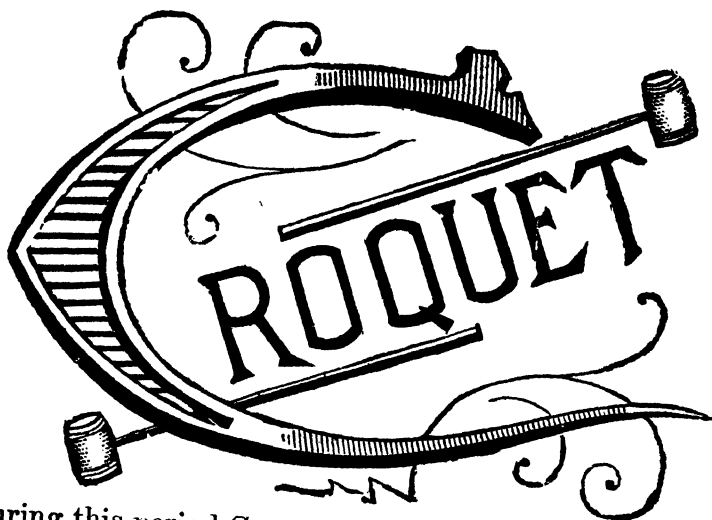
Here is a good Yankee version of a Cuban cigar label, translated for those dyed-in-the-wool Americans who wanted foreign cigars but no foreign words.



This particular cigar brand was probably named after the wife or daughter of the factory owner. Quite a compliment to some non-smoking Victorian lady.



Note the simplicity of line in the work on the dog's head. This, of course was brought about by the necessity of using hard-brass cuts to imprint in wood. These cigar box top brand cuts constitute an outstanding contribution to early American art form. During this particular period, in contrast, type faces, lettering and decorative borders for printing on paper were extremely complicated and full of confusing detail.



During this period Croquet was a popular lawn sport indulged in a very proper manner by "mixed groups," that is, men and women. So it was inevitable that a proper cigar was named after that very proper game.



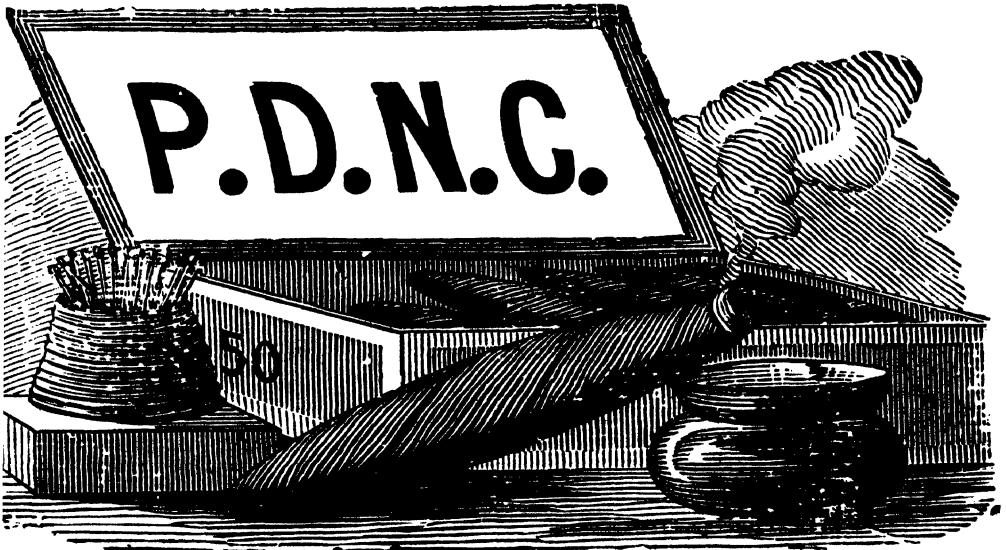
The Victorians were fascinated by Echoes, and probably every county had at least one Echo Lake if not more. Many of these Echo Lakes have since disappeared, and are now called by their map names. The echo and lawn game of croquet were as much a part of Victorian life as the prim segregation of the women-folk, and the maudlin, correct extra-curricular activities of the men. The lettering here is a fine bit of sky-writing, and quite effective.



These two top brands have two things in common. Both show the strong mid-Victorian love of hodge-podge design, with a wide variety of angles combined with numerous curves, which latter showed itself so strongly in the furniture and fret-work of the day. Also, these two borders were stock borders for private top brands. Any initials or name that might fit could be inserted, and the cigar issued exclusively by a local manufacturer.



A good example of Victorian decorative art. The cigar was supposedly of such quality, that to smoke it was **PERFECT BLISS**.



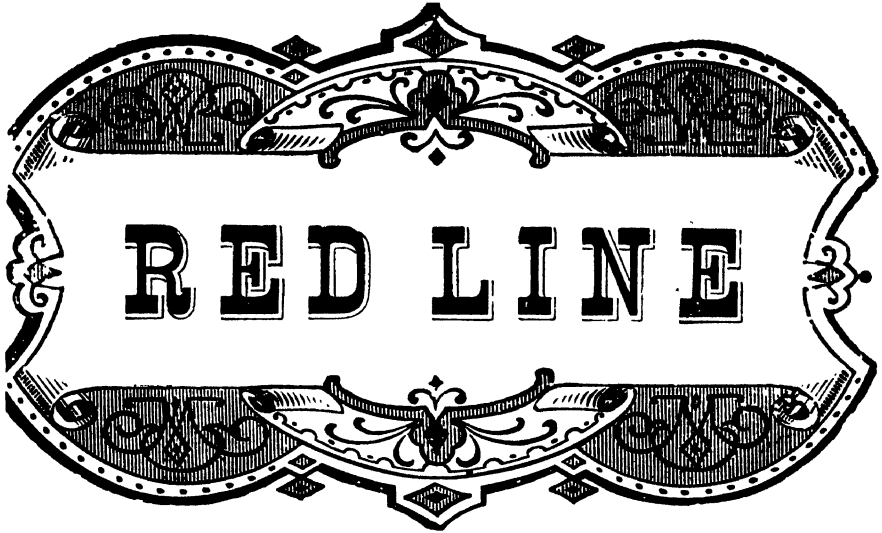
This top-brand with its use of strong line, instead of the fine-lined imitations of photographic illustration, conveys a pleasant picture of the pleasures of smoking of the last century. The strength of rendering the smoking equipment indicates a certain respectable solidness in the fortunate smoker of this particular brand.



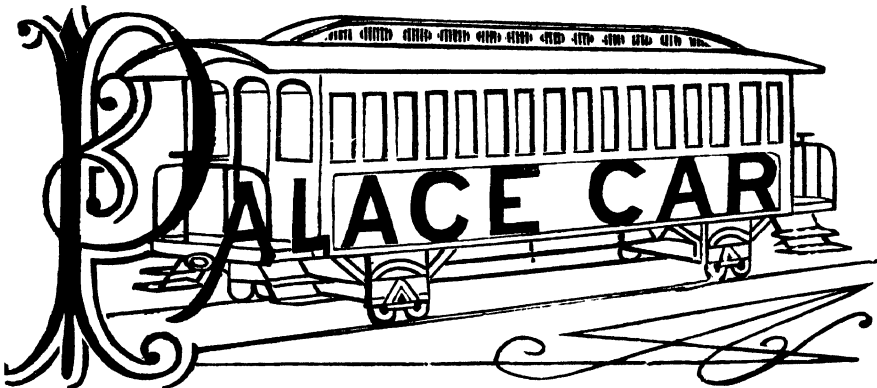
Here was a cigar that offered the pleasures of the secret wood lands. One might be lured into buying it as an escape from tight-laced Victorian living. SPRIGHTS and the way they were pictured beat the most banned magazines of the day in secret appeal.



This was a proud brand, locally made, but seen in practically every cigar-making center in the country. When there were fourteen hundred manufactories in the country I am sure that at least twelve hundred of them put out a fine five cent cigar called OUR FIVE. They wanted the luxury five cent market, and went out after it with this top brand.



This cigar brand took advantage of the great popularity of the railroad, and undoubtedly was sold in stations and saloons along the route.



The Palace (Pullman) Car was the ultimate in luxury rail travel in the last century. Palace Cars had fantastic Victorian interiors, the ultimate of what was then the latest thing. The heavily bearded gentlemen, and the slightly hoop-skirted ladies of the period fitted these stiff, gew-gaw bedecked luxury cars to a T. Cigar manufacturers in tune with their time were quick in picking up the PALACE CAR as a brand name.



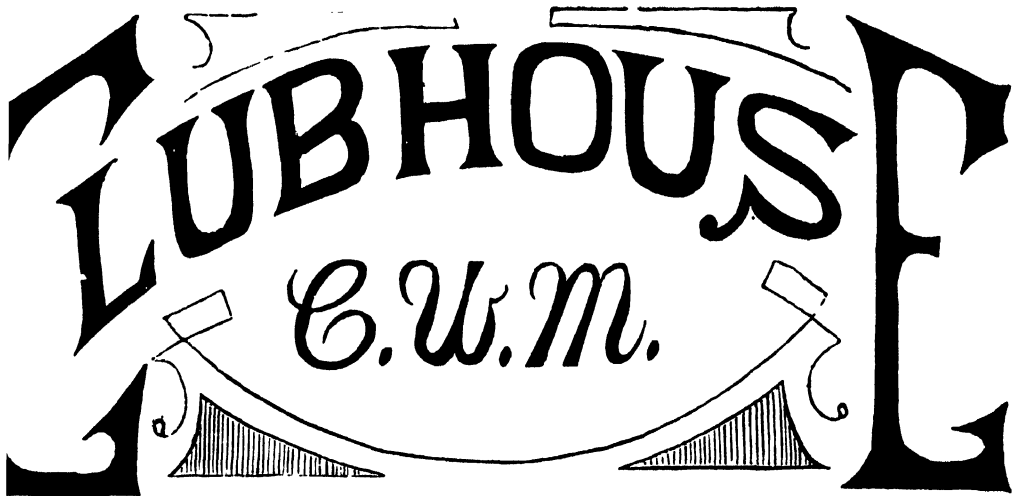
This cigar made by A. H. Platt & Co., of Ithaca, N. Y. was peddled as far West as San Francisco.



It is hard to believe that this die came out of the mid-Victorian period of curlicues, blunt-angles and infinite bits of fret-work; yet it did. The limitations of printing in wood produced this strong work.



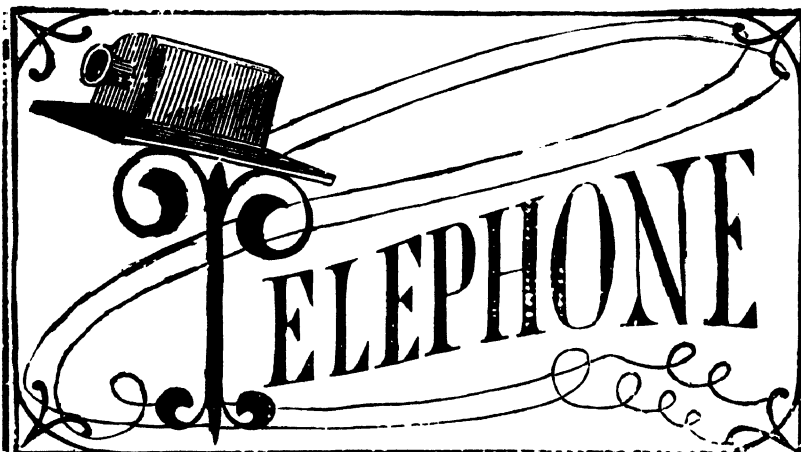
An example of the association of pleasurable wine with pleasurable cigars. In the naming of cigars there was often an attempt to associate the brand name with something equally stimulating to the senses.



This is a variation on OUR CLUB ROOMS, and served the same purpose. Clubs all over the country were quite the social gathering place of gentlemen, had fine billiard tables, easy chairs, and eating and drinking tables. So bring out a cigar called CLUBHOUSE or OUR CLUB ROOMS, and you had many places where you could sell it. It became a highly personalized cigar for many clubs without change of name.



A very polite top brand, done in a simple, effective manner. Nothing florid about this cigar box top brand. It followed the tradition that gold, especially Old Gold, is a soft and lovely thing. It has a contemporary meaning too, the name of one of the four top selling cigarettes. Do the makers of today's Old Gold know that a cigar by the same name once flourished?



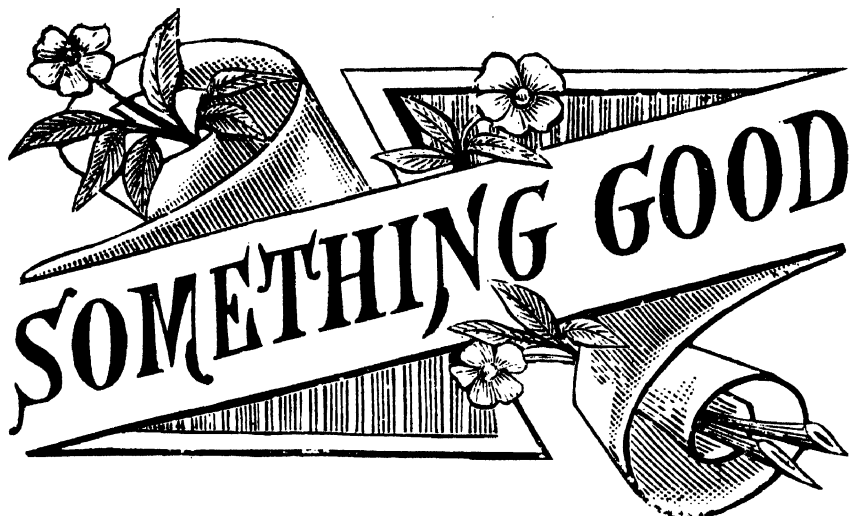
The telephone was fascinating from the very start. Note the one shown in this cut. It looks more like a magic lantern than an instrument of communication. This is definitely a telephone, for part of the decorative effect is achieved with the use of telephone wires. Cigar manufacturers were right on the ball with this crude version, everything possible to catch the fancy of their trade. This brand name dates from the 1870's when, "The Bell Telephone requires only the voice of ordinary conversation."



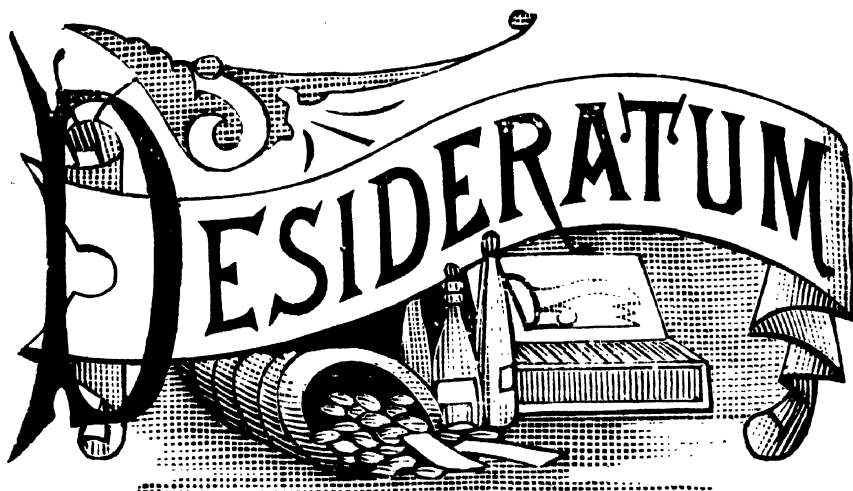
This particular cut is a beautiful thing to see in the original. Hand engraved, and carved skillfully out of hard brass, the workmanship is astounding. A high degree of craftsmanship is shown on many of these early examples of cigar label art.



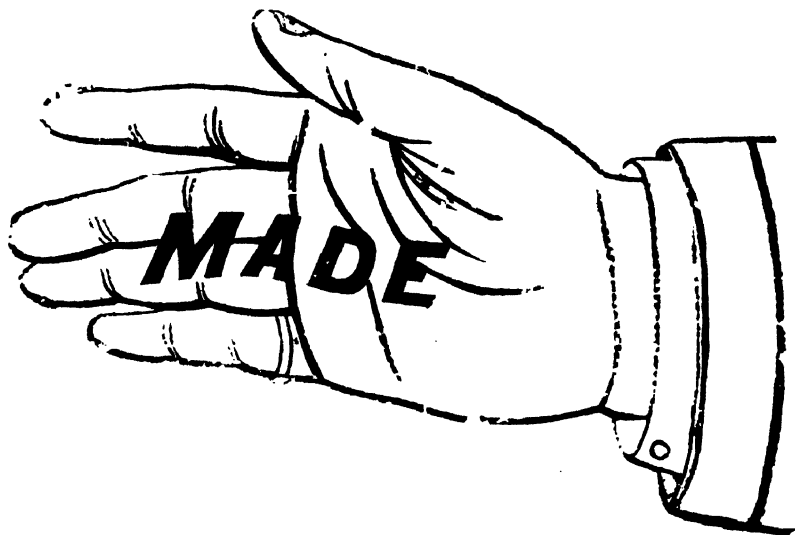
It is very easy to figure out the special market for this cigar. You probably found it in the hotel lobbies and the railroad stations. It was aimed at that vast host of men who traveled in this or that merchandise. Reminder of the hey day of the "drummer," when the country was covered by these busy men who brought New York goods to the grass root hinterlands



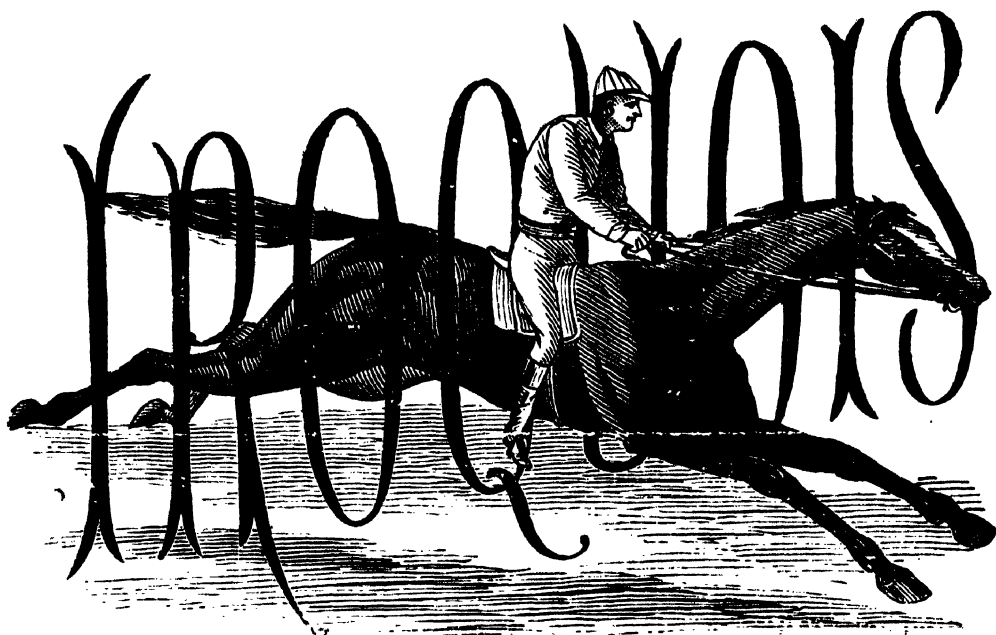
Cigar makers had only one product to be marketed, namely cigars. So they had a problem on their hands. They couldn't very well call every cigar an "El Ropeo." So they associated their brands with the better things of life.



It may have been hard for many cigar smokers to pronounce this brand name, DESIDERATUM, but it gave the idea; also a bit of scholarliness, with a Latin tinge. It implies that cigars are desirable, along with wine and other fine things.



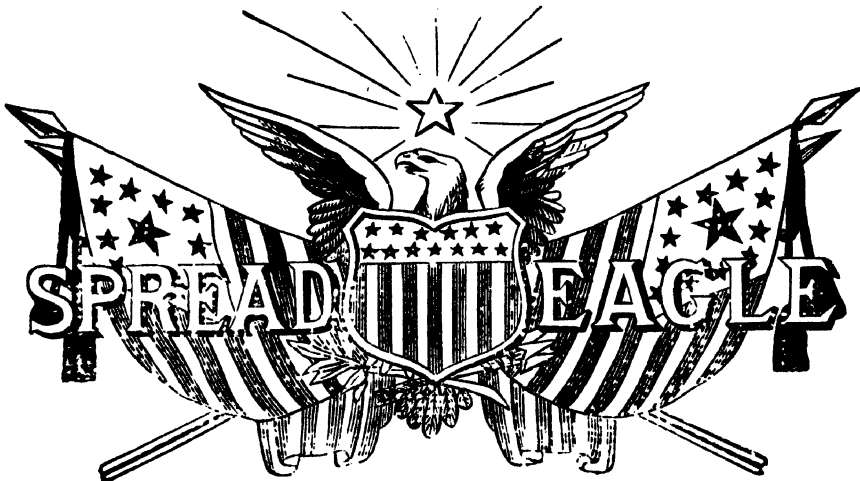
In the Mid-Victorian period, the hand came into its own. There were hand vases, hand plates, hand calling cards and what not. Here we see the vogue reflected in cigar label art.



The famous race horse, Iroquois, was duly honored by having a cigar named after him. This made a very interesting top brand picture out of horse and rider.



This particular top brand is designed to appeal to the hunter, more than to the literary man; Cooper's book was still popular. But a fine set of antlers was even more appealing.



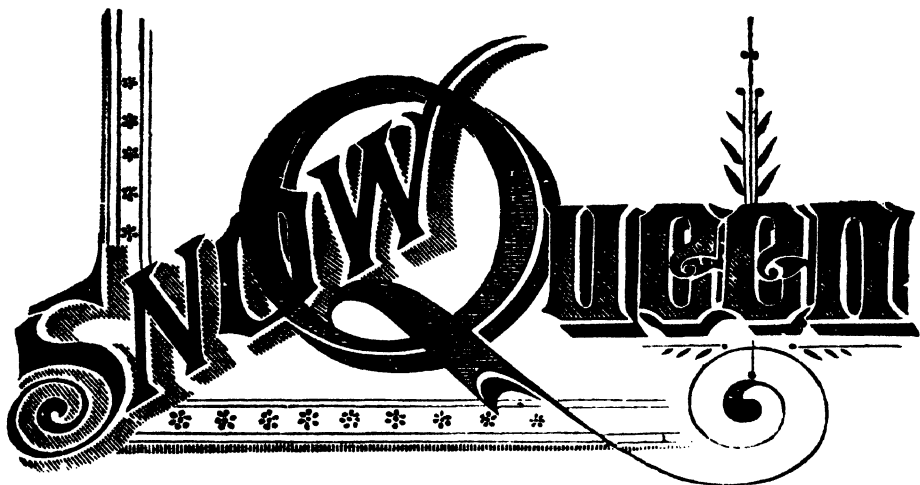
The eagle, especially the American eagle, has always been fascinating. Here is that beloved bird, functioning in the cigar business. A good example of the appeal to patriotism to sell a product. This top brand dates from 1878,



The Aetna Cigar probably does not refer to Mount Aetna, but to an oldtime blast furnace named the Aetna, common in certain steel-making sections. There was method in the madness of naming cigars.



The name is self-explanatory. The leafy decoration is the well-known weed.



Snow Queen was quite a fancy cigar, as the top brand indicates. Here we see a slightly simplified version of the complicated Victorian design and lettering of the day.



The star has always been a symbol of superiority, so here we have it in all its Victorian glory.



The P. G. & P. represents Platts, Gaskin, and Patterson, a fine old cigar manufacturing partnership of the 1870's. During this particular period Mr. A. H. Platts was elected president of Cigar Makers Union.



Here is an easily said name, associated with the wealth of kingdoms. You can picture a derby-hatted gentleman stepping up to the cigar counter and saying, "A half dozen of Diamond Crowns."



This title speaks for itself. You can picture a man walking up to the cigar counter and saying, "FIRST RATE," then feeling the cigar he received was just that.



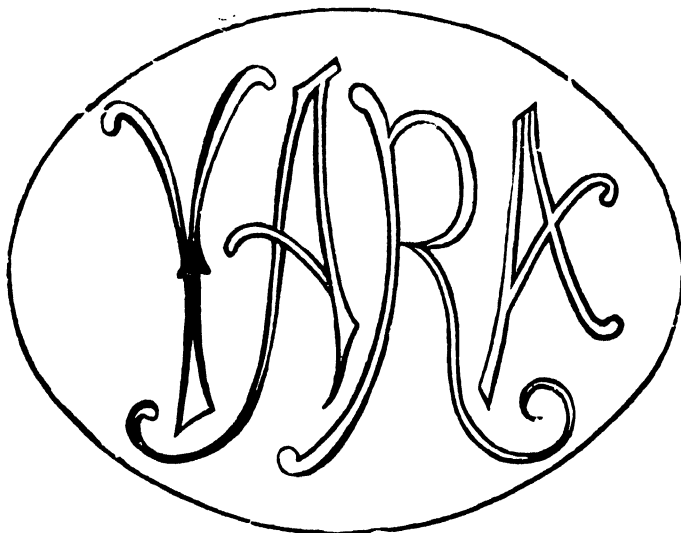
A Yankee who had never left his home county from the day he was born would step up to the cigar counter and ask for what he thought was a good Havana cigar called LA PATRIA, otherwise known as the fatherland. Well, it sounded good.



The Scotch-Americans enjoyed good cigars. As you can see here was one named to appeal directly to them.



It may look strictly Spanish, but don't let names deceive you in early American cigar box art.



A cigar that sold well in spite of its Spanish name. YARA was known all over the country, at one time.



The cigar makers racked their brains to get original brand names, and here is one that was probably very exclusive; perhaps it was a take-off on "First Edition" and "First Rate," typical brands turned out all over the country by local cigar makers.



“Daisy” was always a favorite amongst cigar makers. The author’s collection of cigar labels includes half a dozen different Daisy items. Where is Daisy today in this age of mass production?



This is a case of the cigar manufacturer honoring two members of his family. Definitely Victorian in lettering and decorative border; but still extremely simplified to fit the limitations of a medium, the imprint of cedar box tops.

MEADOW KING.

WELCOME.

AESTHETIC.

CHARM.

IMPERIAL

In spite of the way these four brand names read, they were all separate names of cigars. As one can readily see, they had a direct appeal to the cigar buyer. MEADOW KING was probably a good country cigar. WELCOME was perfect for a Fireman's day, a hotel cigar counter or the first row of an old time saloon's cigar case. AESTHETIC appealed to the finer senses of the Victorian gentlemen. CHARM was something desired by the bederbied dandies. IMPERIAL, of course, tops them all.

PROCLAMATION

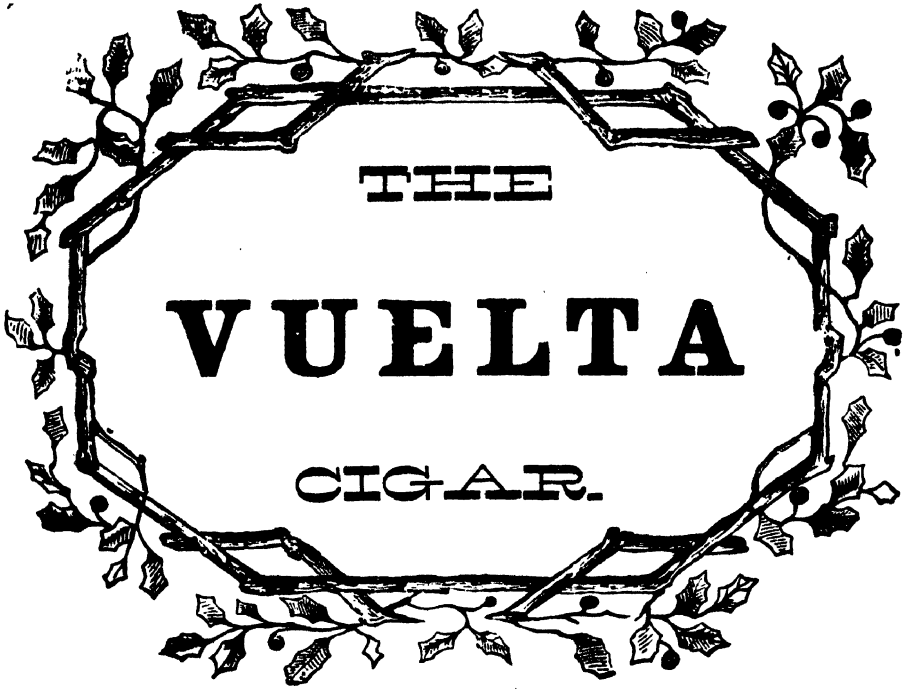
Straight Fives

FAVORITE

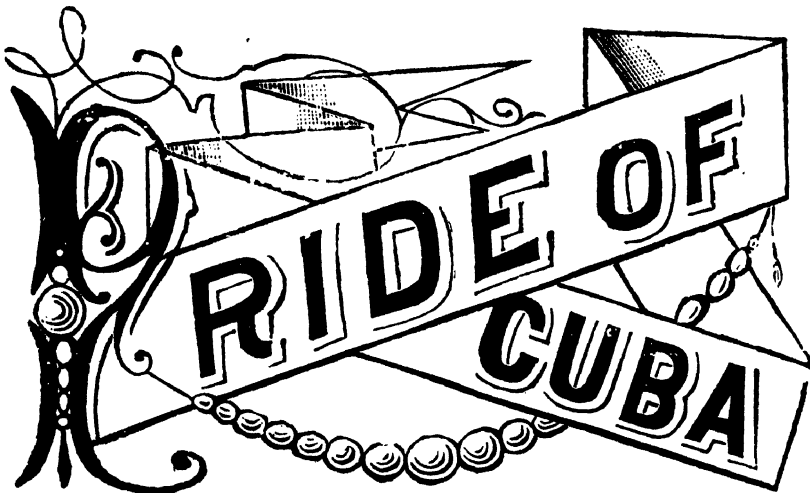
JOHNNY BOUQUET

PROTECTION.

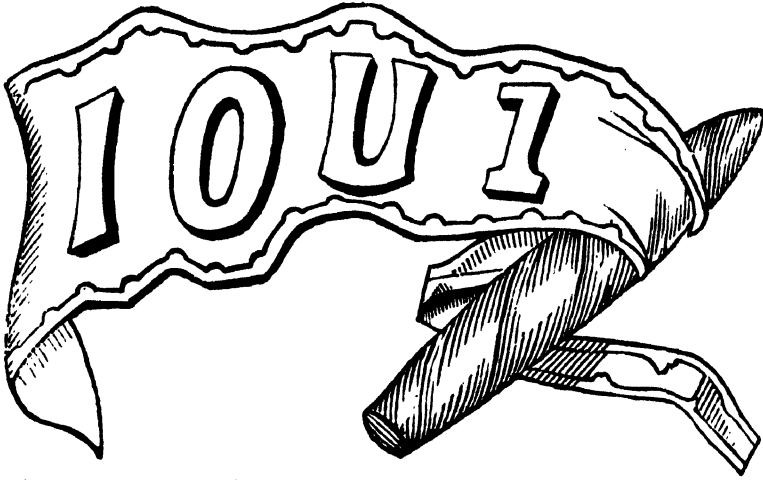
PROCLAMATION may stem from that great historical document, the Emancipation Proclamation—for the cigar makers were as timely with their brands as a modern weekly picture magazine. STRAIGHT FIVES had several possible meanings, a good hand at poker or a fine five cent cigar. The numeral five was, of course a fascinating figure to cigar manufacturers; it represented a high profit item, the cigar that brought in the luxury money. Another similarly titled cigar that had pictures of five tall-helmeted policemen, was properly called FIVE COPPERS. FAVORITE and JOHNNY BOUQUET both appeal to the quality sense, the epicurean taste of the buyer.



The use of the Spanish word Vuelta gives the impression that the cigar was made from the finest Cuban tobaccos grown in the Vuelta Abajo region.



Here is another Yankee attempt to make the cigar brand more than it was. These Pride of Cuba Cigars probably had more American grown tobacco in them than anything else.



This particular cigar attempted to sell itself by serving as reminder of debt unpaid. Note the extreme simplicity of line in the Victorian lettering and cigar drawing.



Here is a get-up, more Spanish than the best Havana art-work. Undoubtedly drawn and engraved by native American craftsmen where the crown on pillow has always had some snob appeal.



QUEEN VICTORIA was quite popular and well known in her day. Here is the top brand for REINA VICTORIA HABABA.



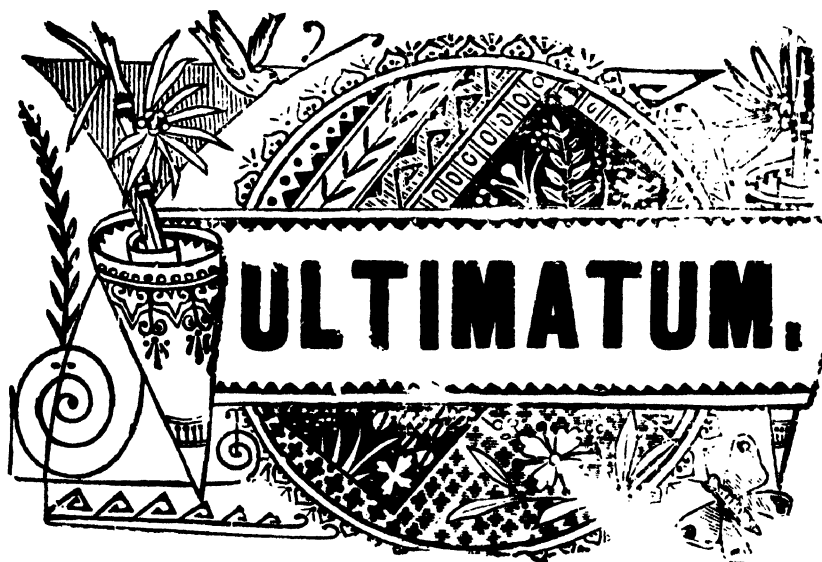
Definitely a clubman's cigar, for use after a pleasant evening with the boys. All towns of any size at all had at least one respectable club, and a good strong nightcap was a way of departing for home and mother.



This seemingly Cuban product was probably understood by most Yankee cigar buyers, for it gave some impression of the glorious.



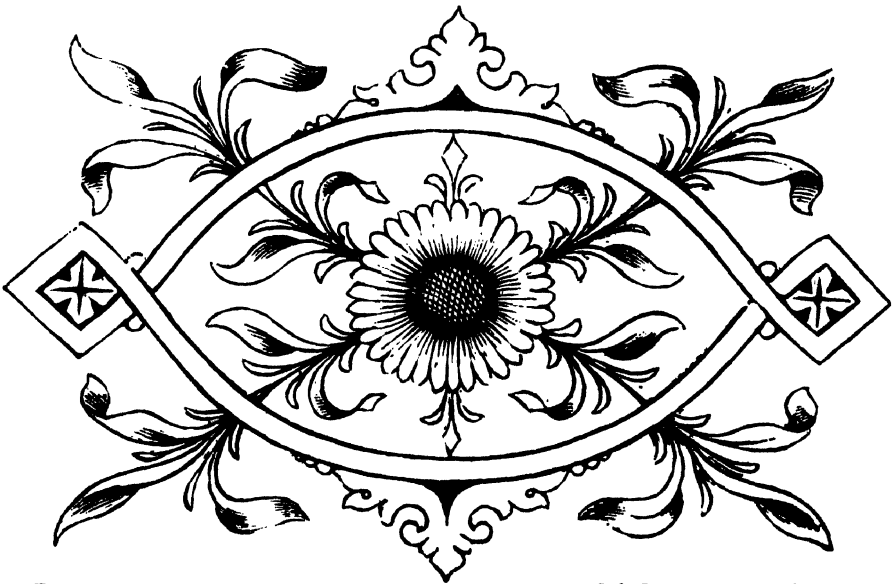
CHICAGO'S FANNY takes easily to various interpretations. As it is undoubtedly a pre-Chicago fire item it could very well have had something to do with that lusty period of Chicago's history—and may very well have meant a famed character of the day.



LA PLUMA, and its brother cigar, ULTIMATUM were originally made by A. H. Platts, Ithaca, N. Y. This manufacturer at one time employed twenty men on the road selling his cigars. The LA PLUMA design is simpler, and slightly earlier, than the ULTIMATUM design.



A simple and easy way to remember identified brand name. Just step up to the counter and ask for a half-a-dozen S N O W FLAKES!



This particular design is a wood-cut which was used as a top brand. It is carved directly into type-high boxwood. The boxwood die is so hard that it shows little sign of wear, even though in the old days it was used for imprinting cedar wood. Each little line, bit of shading, curve, was hand carved by some skilled craftsman of the day. This was undoubtedly used on some elegant, private-brand cigar, where there was no necessity for a brand name.



An example of a cigar brand with a startling title used to catch the eye of the consumer. The design is typical of late Victorian art work.



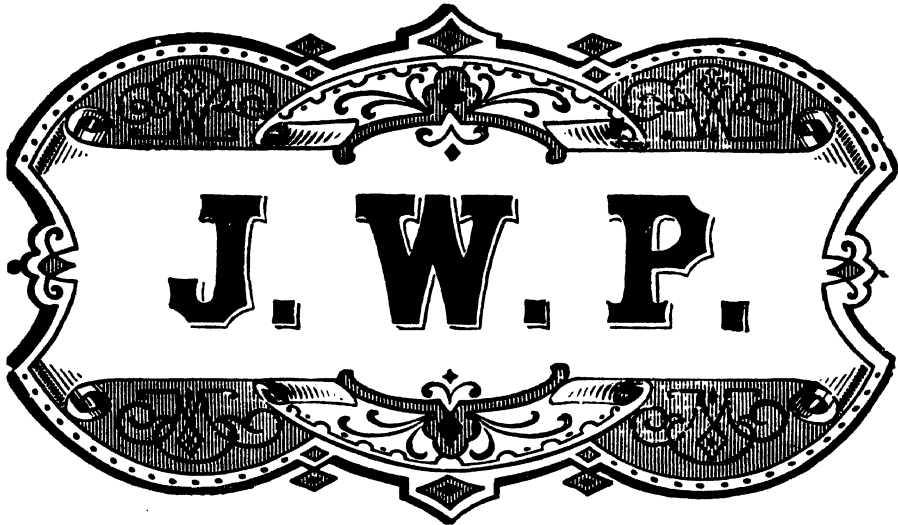
The good old bull-frog is here working for a living. As he is hiding behind his name he is enjoying his own cigar. A rare early example of the play on words of which Americans are so fond.



Sign of a progressive cigar; but what is it? It might be Spanish; it might be English; anyway you get the idea!



Contemporary advertisers might think that this American made cigar of the last century was a highly unethical bit of selling. Not so in those days, for its Yankee makers would have said they used Havana tobaccos. Isn't that near enough?



An example of how private brand cigars were sometimes marked. Of these two I don't know which was first. Off-hand I would say that the second one was the modernized version of the earlier script.



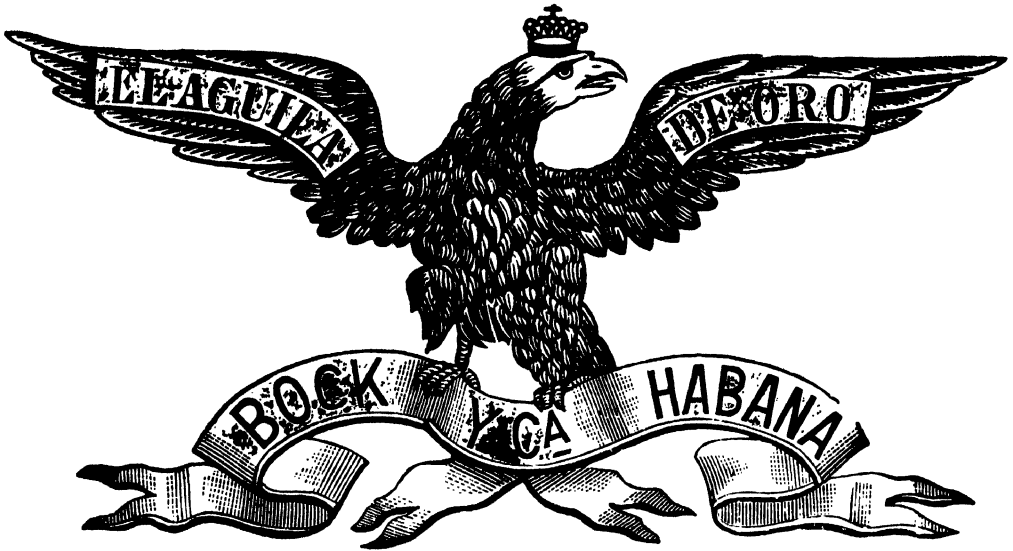
This cigar brand played up that pleasurable Victorian feeling for garlands. But it had more, including diamonds in bold outline!

CONCHAS

This is a good example of restrained use of decorative border, and simple lettering; it is probably a very early top-brand, left over from the 1840's.



Looking at the Spanish-American war with the eyes of a cigar manufacturer, you become practically convinced that we freed Cuba—just to assure us a goodly supply of their cigar tobaccos. After all, most of the industrialists and big-wigs thought war with Spain was a good thing and smoked fine Havana and Vuelta Abajo cigars. Vuelta Abajo is a Cuban district where the finest cigar tobaccos are grown. One might conclude from the above display that the Spanish-American war was brought on the world to protect our source of supply.



Here is the Eagle, a favorite bird used to denote quality, supremacy, the over-lording of lesser brands. Note the successful use of the wings for advertising space. Quite a bird, design-wise.



Would you like a cigar called OLD LAVENDER? Was it suppose to be delicate and mild? Who would know in this late day?



This simple top brand cut was a stock item with a space on the box top for the individual buyer's name to be inserted. Many of the "Nabobs" of the period had their own, strictly private brand of cigars with their name on the box.



Here was a stock border, where anyone's initials were inserted for their own private brand in a cigar.



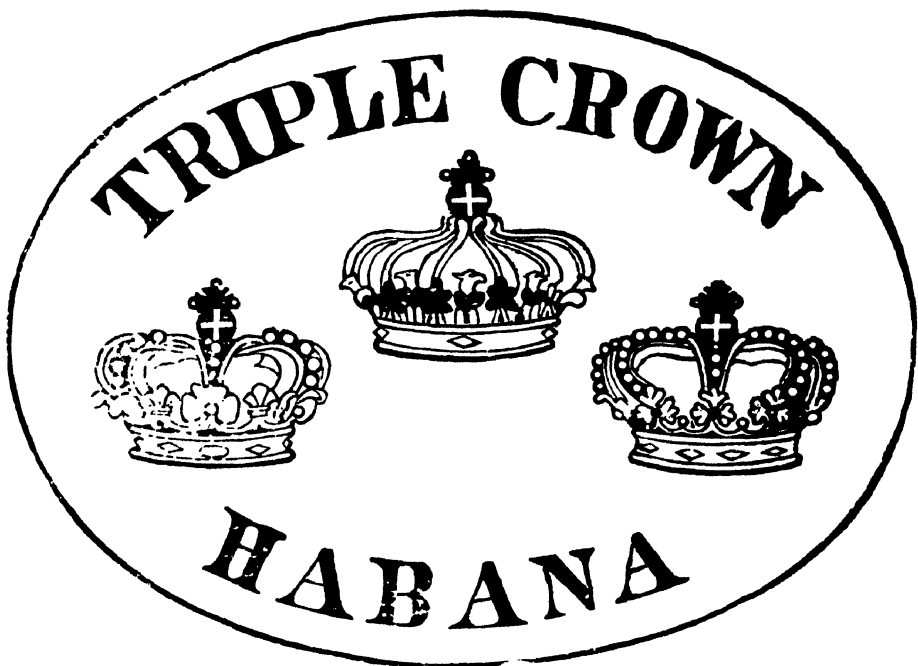
Here is a play on the classical names; that would appeal to all. A generation or two later, a fine racing car came out with this same name.



The more scholarly cigar smokers, that is, those conversant with Spanish, discovered that this very Cuban sounding Yankee cigar, conveyed a choice Latin thought, THE GOOD FIRE.



This particular brand of cigar was associated with that traditionally 'hard currency', and known to all the Nabobs of 1870.



Cigars were often associated with the crowned heads of Europe. This one must have been fine, for it is not only a "Habana" cigar, but a triple one as well.

TOM, DICK AND HARRY.

A cigar label of undoubted universal appeal; how long ago did this Tom, Dick and Harry thing start?



The GOLDEN CHARM name reflects the almost universal habit of wearing a small locket or charm, one that might contain neatly plaited or woven hair of the loved one, or a small daguerreo-type set in.



A typical example of Victorian lettering, with all the little fancy bits that added to the typographic confusion of the period.



This brand of cigars is one of the oldest, and the most famous, made in Ithaca, N. Y. The NABOB cigar is still made by the present owner of the brand name, Charlie Green of Ithaca, N. Y. A man in his eighties, Green still turns out hand made cigars, very similiar to the small pointed ones that were so popular in the last century.



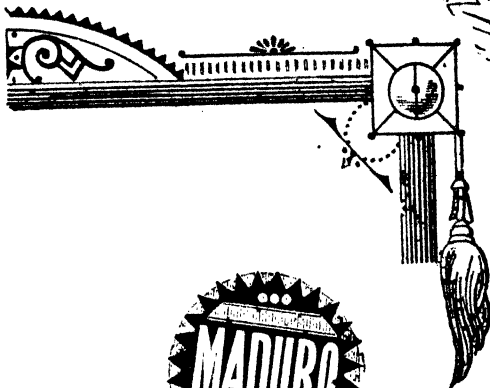
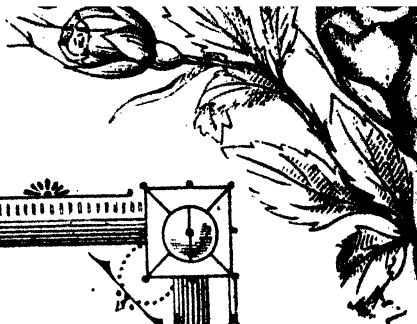
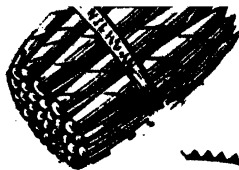
During the hey day of American smoking practically all the cigar manufacturing was done and controlled by old-time Yankees, with here and there in seaboard cities a few German cigar makers. There were very few Spanish speaking cigar-makers in those days. So, when one comes across a top-brand of this sort it raises questions which are very easily answered. The shrewd Yankee cigar manufacturer of the last century made and sold his fine Havana cigars right here in the United States. He missed nothing in giving the impression that the cigars were real Havana imports. The above label is as American as the famed Cigar Store Indian!



SMOKE

Perfectos

TRADE



Finos

